



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# MARCH—WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March is Women's History Month. It's a time dedicated to commemorate and celebrate the accomplishments of women that have contributed to society and this great world.

A big **Shout Out** and thanks to all our women veterans. You have broken barriers for the generations to follow and capitalized on the many leadership opportunities afforded by your military service.

A big **Shout Out** and thanks to all our women CTVSOS for not only serving this great country, but for their dedication in assisting South Dakota's veterans.

A big **Shout Out** and thanks to all our women working in our Claims Office. They served this great country and are now dedicating their lives to assist veterans.

The stories of women veterans are important to the fabric of United States history. Women veterans are leaders. The skills and experiences women veterans gain from their military service leads to a lifetime of achievement in their careers, contributions to communities, and their families.



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## MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

### Veterans Keep Marching On

George Washington once said, "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen."

There was no waiting line for our men and women in uniform when they raised their right hands and volunteered to serve. There shouldn't be a waiting line when they return home and need our help getting the care they've earned.

Unfortunately, it took the government thirty plus years to recognize that there was a link between Agent Orange and the devastating health effects on our service members. Veterans waited decades to get the

care they desperately needed and clearly earned. The VA now recognizes certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. Veterans are encouraged to par-



take in the VA's Agent Orange Registry health exam to ensure that the research continues, presumptives are recognized and care is provided to our veterans.

Conflicts change, contaminants change, but the fact that our heroes are exposed to these toxins has not changed.

Recently the VA launched the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry in response to concerns that veterans who deployed after 1990 were experiencing a range of respiratory illnesses. The goal of the registry is to help researchers study the health effects of burn pits and other airborne hazards. We encourage veterans to visit the registry site ([www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp)) to ensure that our heroes will not have to wait four decades for resolution.

Wars, conflicts and battles have been fought throughout the years and continue today. Continued research is vital if we are to complete our promise to take care of the men and women who served.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

## VETERANS/LAW ENFORCEMENT WALLEYE MASTER FISHING TOURNAMENT

The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Veterans Service Office is sponsoring the "Veterans/Law Enforcement Walleye Master Fishing Tournament" May 20th at Piyas Lake in Marshall County. Fishing starts at 9:00 am (CT) and runs till 2:00 pm (CT).

Must be two-person teams, one of which must be a veteran or a law enforcement officer. Entry fee per team is \$50. Places will be chosen by total weight of fish and teams may weigh up to six fish.

First place pays \$300, second place pays \$200, and third place pays \$100. In addition, door prizes will be given away.

To register for the tournament call Geri Opsal or Gabe Fischer @ 605.698.3388.



# Save *the* Date

Improving  
Combat  
Veterans Care



This conference delivers important information that will assist healthcare providers and other professionals as they work to support families of Veterans and our Citizen Soldiers in South Dakota.

The one-day conference will be held in Sioux Falls.

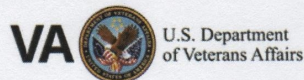
Sioux Falls, South Dakota **Friday May 12, 2017**  
University Center

**Focus:**  
**Access to Care**  
**Suicide Prevention**

To register & for details contact Yankton Rural AHEC:

**www.yrahec.org** or call (605)655-8285

Partners:



## DOL GRANTS TO HELP VETERANS OVERCOME HOMELESSNESS AND SECURE EMPLOYMENT

The U.S. Department of Labor announces the availability of approximately \$12 million in funding from the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program to provide America's military veterans with job-driven training for in-demand jobs to help them attain good civilian jobs and transition successfully from homelessness to sustainable housing. Homeless veterans may receive occupational, classroom and on-the-job training, as well as job search and placement assistance, including follow-up services.

State and local workforce investment boards, local public agencies and nonprofit organizations, and tribal governments, including faith-based and community organizations are eligible. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis.

The closing date for applications is March 31, 2017, and the link is: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=292108>.

More information on DOL's unemployment and re-employment programs for veterans can be found at [www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/).

## SDSU TO HOLD VETERANS AFFAIRS RESOURCE CENTER GRAND OPENING

The South Dakota State University Veterans Affairs Office will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 17 at 1:30 p.m. as part of the Veterans Affairs Resource Center grand opening.

The Veterans Resource Center, which has been located in the University Student Union the past three academic years, is now in Brown Hall. The Home Depot and Student Veterans of America awarded a \$10,000 grant to help facilitate the move. The award is part of the Vet Center Initiative, which started in 2014. South Dakota State is one of 50 campus communities chosen in 2016.

The event will begin in Honors Hall room 118 and be followed by an open house at the new center.

The move allows the Veterans Affairs Office and its resource center to be in one location. The Veterans Affairs Office had been in Spencer Hall before moving to Brown Hall. In addition, veterans will have 24/7 access to the center, which has a study area as well as a place to watch TV or meet with their peers.

The current facility averages 30 visits a day for the spring 2017 semester. At that rate, the center could reach 4,200 visits—an increase of 900 when compared to spring 2016.

"We're looking forward to opening the VARC to give our students a place that provides them many resources to be successful as well as a gathering place," said Russ Chavez, interim director for Veterans Affairs. "This center is just part of what we are doing for our students who are service members and their dependents."

SDSU was ranked eighth among four-year schools by Military Times in its Best for Vets: Colleges 2017 rankings.

## VA SECRETARY ANNOUNCES INTENTION TO EXPAND MENTAL HEALTH CARE TO FORMER SERVICE MEMBERS WITH OTHER-THAN-HONORABLE DISCHARGES AND IN CRISIS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin while testifying in a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing Tuesday, March 7, 2017, announced his intention to expand provisions for urgent mental health care needs to former service members with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges. This move marks the first time a VA Secretary has implemented an initiative specifically focused on expanding access to assist former OTH service members who are in mental health distress and may be at risk for suicide or other adverse behaviors.

"The president and I have made it clear that suicide prevention is one of our top priorities," Shulkin said. "We know the rate of death by suicide among veterans who do not use VA care is increasing at a greater rate than veterans who use VA care. This is a national emergency that requires bold action. We must and we will do all that we can to help former service members who may be at risk. When we say even one veteran suicide is one too many, we mean it."

It is estimated that there are a little more than 500,000 former service members with OTH discharges. As part of the proposal, former OTH service members would be able to seek treatment at a VA emergency department, Vet Center or contact the Veterans Crisis Line.

"Our goal is simple: to save lives," Shulkin continued. "Veterans who are in crisis should receive help immediately. Far too many veterans have fallen victim to suicide, roughly 20 every day. Far too many families are left behind asking themselves what more could have been done. The time for action is now."

Before finalizing the plan in early summer, Shulkin will meet with Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and Department of Defense officials to determine the best way forward to get these veterans the care they need.

"I look forward to working with leaders like Congressman Mike Coffman from Colorado, who has been a champion for OTH service members," Shulkin added. "I am grateful for his commitment to our nation's veterans and for helping me better understand the urgency of getting this right." Veterans in crisis should call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 (press 1), or text 838255.





Contact Taryn  
or Candice  
for information  
about ordering  
"Purple Up  
for Military Kids"  
T Shirts

# April is the Month of the Military Child

April is a time to recognize and thank our military children and youth for their contributions, strength and service.

There are over 7,100 military youth in South Dakota. Join us in celebrating them!

Show your support and wear Purple! Join the SDNG Child & Youth Program, SDSU 4H Extension, and communities nationwide in honoring our military youth.

Wear purple on Thursday, April 13th, for Purple Up for Military Kids Day.

Purple is the color that symbolizes all branches of the Military.

Help us to create a "sea of purple" as a visible salute to our military youth.



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# Upcoming Events

Mar. 9—SFVAHCS Art Show—2nd Floor of the New Primary Care Addition (access using stairs or elevator from the front foyer of the medical center) - 10:00 am—2:00 pm  
Mar. 17—Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Code Talker Honoring Ceremony—Wakpala School Auditorium—1:00 pm  
Mar. 29—"Clay County's Fallen" Research Contest—USD School of Education—Room 118—Vermillion—5:00-8:00 pm (CT)  
Apr. 13—SFVAHCS Veterans Town Hall—Dakota Playhouse—DSU Campus—Madison—5:00 pm (CT) with Benefits Fair at 4:00 pm (CT)  
Apr. 13 Purple Up for Military Kids Day  
Apr. 19—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
Apr 28-30—DAV Annual Convention—AmericInn—Fort Pierre  
May 12—Improving Combat Veterans Care—Sioux Falls University Center  
Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown  
Jun 22-25—State VFW Convention—Pierre  
Aug. 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota

Here's  
What's  
Happening!

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